MUSICAL COMMENTS.

THE ORGANIST OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY—HOW THAYER DIED—STORIES OF THE OCTOGENARIAN VERDI—THE DONIZETTI EXHIBITION.

One of the musical incidents of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was the knighting of Dr. Bridge, organist of Westminster Abbey, who is henceforth to be known as Sir Frederick Bridge by the world at large, without losing, we are sure, the sobriquet of "Westminster Bridge," which is habitually applied to him by his friends in England. There are not many more social or political honors for Sir Frederick to acquire, and it is a pleasant reflection for any one who is wise enough to know how much good there is in English musical scholarship, and frank and unconventional enough to accord it acknowledgment and praise, to observe how long, patiently and well he has worked for his present eminent position. He is now nearly fifty-three years old, having been born at Oldbury, near Birmingham, on December 5, 1844. When he was six years old, he went to Rochester, where his father became vicar-choral, and he went into the cathedral as "practising boy." It is a long cry from chorister to Westminster Abbey organist, Doctor of Music, Gresham professor and knight but Bridge put his foot on every step of the way, as we note from an interesting illustrated sketch of him in the August number of "The Musical Times." Not one step was missed. He even blew the organ for the practice work of a fellow-chorister, and when the latter (now Dr. Armes, organist of Durnam Cathedral) took him with him on the organ bench, it was to have him push in or pull out the pedal couples on a signal. His earlier posts as parish organist were at Shorne, Strood and Windsor, while at the last place he took his baccalaureate degree in music at Oxford. He next became organist of Manchester Cathedral, and held the post for six years from 1869, within which period he took the degree of Doctor of Music. In 1875 he became permanent deputy organist of Westminster Abbey, becoming organist on the death of Mr. James Turle, in 1882. Since then he has been appointed professor of harmony and counterpoint in the Royal College of Music, Gresham professor of music (1890) and conductor of the Royal Albert Hall Choral Society (1896). For the recent Jubilee Dr. Bridge composed a setting of Rudyard Kipling's "The Flag of England."

Commenting on one of the most conspicuous functions which Sir Frederick's post as organist of Westminster brings with it, "The Musical Times" says:

Sir Frederick Bridge has played a prominent part in the obsequies of great men, such as Darwin, Browning and Tennyson, and at memorial services of many other distinguished personages. His first experience in the way of paying honor to the great dead occurred in 1852, when he assisted to toll the Cathedral bell at the death of the Duke of Wellington. "I should like to be able to say that I helped to toll for the Duke of Wellington," said the little eight-year-old chorister to the blind bell-ringer of Rochester Cathedral, and who could refuse such a request? Bridge, being a junior boy, to his great regret was not one of the two Rochester choristers selected to sing at the great Duke's funeral at St. Paul's, but the music which Goss composed for the occasion was rehearsed at Rochester. So vivid was the impression made on that young mind by the dirge "Know ye not that a prince and a great man is fallen this day in Israel?" that when, twenty-nine years later, he had to prepare the music for the memorial service of Lord Beaconsfield, he suggested this anthem to Dean Stanley. [illegible] for what occasion it had been composed, the Dean observed that the death of Lord Beaconsfield had made a greater impression on the public mind than the death of any [illegible] since Wellington. It is also interesting to record that this most appropriate dirge was sung at the Dean's own funeral in the Abbey, July 25, 1881. When he was nine years old, Master Bridge and his father sang under Costa at the opening, by the Queen, of the Crystal Palace on June 10, 1854.

A private letter recounts the story of Alexander W. Thayer's last days as follows:

As you know, he had been sinking for several years. For two years it had been impossible for him to take any solid food, and when I arrived in Trieste three weeks before his death I was shocked to see how he had wasted away, and realized that the end could not be far. His head was still handsome, and he had very few wrinkles in his face; but his poor body was emaciated in the extreme. His condition, I was told, had been the same for several months. He said every little while, "I want to die; I am tired of life." His memory had suffered, and he would ask the same question several times. Three days before his death he seemed a little more feeble, and refused milk or wine. Then he seemed to rally until on Thursday, July 15, the servant called me early saying that "Il Signor Console sta malato sofferto molta sta mattina" ("The Consul suffers much this morning"). I went to him and found him groaning and trying to seek relief from pain by constantly changing his position from lying down to sitting up. I sent for the doctor, who said that his condition was rather serious. He came back at noon and said he was in danger. After noon he lay still and spoke only once or twice. In the evening at 10 o'clock he died as peacefully as a child goes to sleep. I was sitting by him, and noticed that his breathing seemed less labored. I felt that he was resting more comfortably, when at once I realized that his breath came lighter, and in a few moments he was dead. It was a very peaceful and beautiful end.

An editorial lament in "The Daily Picayune" of New-Orleans leads to the conviction that French grand opera has fallen upon evil days in that interesting city. Says the journal in question:

For half a century, with lapses for a season or so, the opera has been maintained by the people of this city, and it had come to be one of their distinctive and distinguished institutions. It is feared, however, that conditions have changed, and the opera will no longer have a home among them.

For many years there were enough gentlemen of means who were music-lovers to form an association for the maintenance of the French opera in New-Orleans. They guaranteed all financial deficiencies and divided the losses among themselves. They did this when the population of the city was much smaller and when disadvantages were greater. But some have died, others have become impoverished, and others have moved away. Fewer and fewer have been found to take their places, and so the conditions that made the French opera an institution here are changing. Times change and men change with them, and it is too much to expect that the events of the past can ever again become realities.

The Milanese publishers, Ricordi & Co., sent a notable exhibit to the recent Donizetti exhibition in Bergamo. It embraced the original scores of "Lucrezia Borgia," "Don Pasquale," "Anna Bolena," "Belisario," "Il Furioso all' Isola di S. Domingo," and "Torquato Tasso," besides the printed pianoforte and vocal scores of the whole of Donizetti's operas. Noteworthy, too, is the manuscript text of the comic opera "Il Campanello," written in Donizetti's own hand; in this instance he was his own librettist, and the opera was produced at Naples in 1836, with the celebrated Ronconi (then a young man of twenty-six) in the principal part. On one of the walls were displayed the original sketches for the scenery and costumes of the posthumous opera "Il Duca d'Alba," written for the Grand Opera in Paris in 1840, but never produced there. The score was completed by Signor Matteo Salvi, and it was brought out at La Scala, Milan, in 1882, but with only moderate success.

Apropos of the approaching eighty-fifth birthday of Verdi, a few incidents come to mind. It is said that he came down to town from his country-seat at Sant' Agata a few weeks ago and spent a whole day transacting business appertaining to his farm, buying and selling cattle, etc., winding up with a big supper, to which he invited a number of his friends at the hotel in the evening. Five years ago Signor Crispi congratulated him on arriving at his eightieth birthday in a telegraphic dispatch, as follows: "Francesco Crispi rejoices with Giuseppe Verdi, and hopes that for the greater glory of Italian art he will attain at least the age of the Maëstro Galmini." Verdi replied: "It gives me great satisfaction to receive the good wishes of Francesco Crispi. I declare that I shall do everything possible to reach the age which he wishes me." Galmini was an obscure Italian musician who lived to be one hundred and thirty-five years old.

A striking illustration of how wofully foreign intelligence can be perverted by the German is found in a recent number of a little journal called "Signale für die Musikalische Welt," published in Leipsic. As The Tribune readers will remember one of the musical features of the Jubilee festivities in London last June was the performance of a "Te Deum," composed by Sir George Clement Martin, on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral. This fact is thus chronicled by the "Signale": "Queen Victoria has decided to adopt a new national hymn, which was first performed in front of St. Paul's Church on the occasion of the Jubilee festivities on June 22. It was written and composed by the Benedictine Monk, Pater George Clement Clarke."

Here is a small budget of foreign items: The great and only Chevalier de Kontski has been giving concerts in Eastern Siberia.....The house in which Orlando di Lasso lived in Munich from 1532 to 1594 has been torn down, but a record of the site will be preserved by a memorial tablet to be affixed to the building erecting on the place.....Kistner, in Leipsic, has published four new songs without accompaniment for mixed voices by Dvorák. They are said to be extremely original and beautiful. .....Sir Arthur Sullivan has been decorated by his Queen with the Order of Victoria.....The society which purchased the Beethoven house in Bonn, so that it might be preserved as a museum, has offered three prizes amounting to 2,000 marks ($500) for the best piece of chamber music composed by musicians born before 1876. One composition must be for strings alone, one for pianoforte and strings, one for wind instruments alone or in combination with pianoforte or strings. Score and parts are to be sent to Dr. Joachim, No. 17 Bendlerstrasse, Berlin, before December 17, 1897. The judges are to be Dr. Joachim, Professor von Herzogenberg, Rheinberger, Reinecke; Dr. Wolff (Bonn) and Dr. Mandyczewski (Vienna).....Felix Draeseke is said to be at work upon an oratorio in three parts, entitled "Christus".....A new "Requiem" by Dr. C. Villiers Stanford will be performed at the Birmingham festival on October 6. Dr. Stanford is also said to be writing a "Te Deum" for the next Leeds festival.....Johann Strauss is reported to have composed a new comic operetta for the Theater an der Wien this summer.

SIR FREDERICK BRIDGE.
(Organist of Westminster Abbey.)

MR. DREW COULD NOT GIVE THE SHOW.

From The Troy Press.

While Mr. Drew was in town last week he related one of the funniest of his old-time experiences. When he and his brother were playing in Troy the company had an evening off here for some cause or other, and the manager decided to send it to Cohoes for an experiment. He hired a hall, advertised the attraction, placed seats on sale at the usual place, and sent a young man there to take up the tickets at the door. As he was unable to go personally, he told Frank to look after matters and see that everything was all right. A little after 7 o'clock Frank went to the hall and asked the doortender if anybody had gone in yet.

"Oh, yes," was the reply; "there are fifty or sixty inside."

"But where are the tickets?" asked Frank.

"They didn't give me any," was the reply. "Each one came to the door, said 'Cataract,' and walked past me. It must be raining dreadfully outside."

"Raining?" replied Frank. "It's not raining at all. What does this mean?"

As he was talking, a young man walked up to the door, looked at Mr. Drew, exclaimed "Cataract!" walked in and took a seat. Neither a ticket nor a cent had been received, yet it looked as though there would be a good house if the "cataract" expedient continued.

Mr. Drew stepped inside and said to the audience: "Gentlemen, you must excuse my ignorance, as I am a stranger in town, but will somebody inform me what is the meaning of the word 'cataract,' which you have all used here to-night?"

'Why, that's the name of our newspaper," somebody spoke up.

"Oh," said Mr. Drew, "I see now. I am sorry to disappoint you, but as there is nobody here [illegible] there will be no show to-night. Good evening."

A FRIEND OF TOLSTOI.

M. TCHERTKOFF ON THE RUSSIAN REFORMER'S PRIVATE LIFE.

From The London Daily News.

The room in which our interview took place was plainly that of an ascetic. The house stood in its own grounds, in one of the prettiest parts of Croydon. But the inside was very different from the conventional interiors of its neighbors. The stairs were carpetless, and the room where we sat was monkish in its simplicity. An iron bedstead occupied one corner; the floor was uncovered, even by a rug. The few articles of furniture were all of the plainest wood, unpainted and unvarnished. Near the window were two big deal tables containing in orderly array a number of Russian and English books and papers. Before one of the tables sat M. Tchertkoff, a tall, bearded, young-looking man, attired in a shapeless moujik's smock, yet with the irremovable stamp of the Russian aristocrat upon him. Some members of our Foreign Office will remember M. Tchertkoff as a brilliant and fashionable young officer of the Russian Guards, who spent some time in London eighteen years ago as a member of the suite of his uncle, Count Schouvaloff, who was then Russian Ambassador here. Since that time his life has greatly altered. Like another of his uncles, M. Paschkoff, the leader of the Russian Evangelicals, he tired of fashion and society, resigned his commission and threw in his lot with the poor. Finding in Tolstoi one of like mind, he became his helper, working ardently to spread the knowledge of, and to prove the practicability of, the Christian teaching as expressed in Tolstoi's writings. Recently, in consequence of this and of an endeavor he made to induce the young Emperor to check the persecuting zeal of M. Pobedonostseff, the reformer was exiled from Russia, hence his presence in Croydon.

"What truth is there, M. Tchertkoff," I asked, "in the rumors that have recently been circulated that the Czar intends to exile Tolstoi?"

"The rumors are not apparently true, and they have probably arisen because proceedings have been taken against some of Tolstoi's friends. But the Emperor has no intention of exiling Tolstoi himself, probably thinking that if this were done it would immensely increase his influence and lead people to look on him as a martyr. Tolstoi has requested the authorities to proceed against him. His books, as you probably know, are not allowed to be openly circulated in Russia, although they are largely read there in manuscript and in printed copies that are smuggled in. Some time ago a workingman in one of the large Russian towns wrote to Tolstoi, asking where he could see copies of some of his works. When the workingman had sent a third letter of inquiry Tolstoi remembered that in that town there was a young woman physician, not a revolutionist by any means, but who had some copies of his works. He wrote to the man, telling him that if he called on this lady she would probably be able to show him what he wanted. The letter was opened by the police before it reached the lady, and they arrested her and threw her into prison. She had been in prison before for a short time on account of another kind of error on the part of the Government, and, being of a weak and very nervous temperament, became hysterical, would hurl herself against the walls of her cell, and was brought almost to the point of madness. This, having previously been the case, made Tolstoi especially anxious for her, and he wrote to two of the Ministers, asking why people who had his books should be punished, while he, the author of the books, was allowed to go free. If his books were regarded as harmful, why did they not punish him? But the authorities made no response."

TOLSTOI'S PRIVATE LIFE.

"It is sometimes said, M. Tchertkoff, that Tolstoi, while preaching simplicity and poverty, lives in the utmost luxury—is this true?"

"I know the rumor, for it is freely repeated all over Russia. But to understand the truth you must be acquainted with Tolstoi's most private and intimate affairs. He is not alone; he is a married man; he married when he thought very differently on social questions to what he does now, and his wife does not at all share his social views. He prefers simplicity, but he feels that it would be unjust for him to force his family to live in the way that he thinks best. He handed the bulk of his property over to his wife many years ago, but even if he had not done so she could, if she wished, easily have obtained from the authorities an order to this effect. His wife maintains her house in the ordinary style of Russians of her class, but to Tolstoi all this luxury is abhorrent and painful. He takes no personal share in it, and lives as a guest in the house of his wife; although he may sit at the dinner table, on which there are many viands, he confines himself to his own simple vegetarian diet; he does everything for himself; he cleans his own room, and employs no servant to wait upon him."

"Pardon the interruption, M. Tchertkoff, but does he really keep his room clean and tidy?"

"Well, perhaps if you saw the room you would say that it did not look as tidy as one might like—Tolstoi has not the spirit of tidiness, and does not trouble to have all his things neatly arranged, as many of us prefer; but that, of course, is a matter of temperament."

"Does he still engage in manual work?"

"Yes. Having no farm of his own, he cannot till his own soil, so he goes and helps his poorer neighbors to plough the land and sow their seed. He also employs himself in bootmaking, and can put together a pair of shoes. Then he engages in chopping wood for the stoves, and in chopping for a Russian fire is very different from what you do here, for wood is used in Russia in considerable quantities as fuel. In various other ways he works with his hands. He also gives several hours each day to writing."

"Are his family altogether out of sympathy with him?"

"By no means. They all feel for him very deep affection, as it is hardly possible for any one to know him without doing. His two eldest daughters, especially, share his views and help him largely in copying out his work and answering his correspondence. Of course he does not employ any paid secretary or amanuensis, as that would be quite contrary to his negative attitude toward money and hired labor."

A SELF-SACRIFICING FRIEND.

From The Washington Star.

"Yes," said the politician, "I said I was the workingman's friend."

"But you don't do any work," suggested the man with calloused hands.

"No—not at present."

"And you never did any work."

"That's true. You see, what the workingman most needs is work. And I am too much the workingman's friend to run any risk of taking work away from him."